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United States Department of Agriculture,

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY.

THE CIVIL SERVICE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., June 20, 1896.

SIR: Since all positions in the Department of Agriculture, with the exception of ordinary laborers and three officers appointed by the President, by and with the consent of the Senate, have by recent order been included in the classified service, it is necessary to arrange a uniform system for securing persons for this service and filling vacancies.

The special examinations hitherto held from time to time for scientific positions are too expensive and troublesome. Designed as they usually are to secure experts in some comparatively narrow department of science, they often result in the certification of narrowly educated specialists or amateurs with no breadth and little experience. For all its best work the Department needs men of broader scientific training than can be thus obtained. The ideal man for the more important positions in our service is the one who has had a liberal education, to which has been added general education in the natural sciences and special training and experience in some particular department of scientific work.

In order to secure a corps of such experts it is desirable to establish permanent lists of eligibles who have had the advantages, first, of a liberal education, and, second, of special scientific training in certain lines. It is also very desirable to give our assistants, before they are advanced to positions of responsibility, a longer period of apprenticeship in the various divisions and laboratories of this Department than that now provided. In this way they would have an opportunity to get needed special training and the Department would have the opportunity to decide exactly what each man was best fitted for.

As one of the leading scientific agencies of the Government, it is eminently desirable from every point of view that this Department should establish some relations with the scientific institutions of the country, for the purpose of securing some of their best graduates for its service, and encouraging young persons to prepare themselves for it. While our chief object must be to secure the ablest and best trained persons for our branch of the public service, it is clearly our duty to do at the same time all we can to promote the interests of all the scientific institutions in the country by giving their graduates such opportunities for special training as may be offered in our various laboratories and thus to develop a large corps of workers to serve the agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and other scientific institutions of the country, as well as this Department.

To this end this Department respectfully requests that your Commission establish permanent lists of eligibles under the different titles mentioned herein. It is suggested that the examinations for the scientific service of the Department of Agriculture should consist of two parts:

1. *General assistants to be called simply "assistants."*—A general examination to test the liberal education and general scientific training of the candidate. The scope of this examination can be agreed upon later, but it seems to us that it should at least equal in breadth the courses given in the best colleges of agriculture and engineering, and should include physiography and the agricultural resources of the country. This examination should be so framed as to test the general ability and training of the candidate, rather than his technical knowledge of sciences, which is sufficiently covered by one of the next examinations.

Those who pass this examination should be placed upon a list of "general assistants" and be eligible for appointment to any minor position as assistant (such as is now called "messenger," "expert laborer," "storekeeper," etc.) in

the general offices, the Bureau of Animal Industry, the Weather Bureau, Statistical Division, or any other division or laboratory.

2. *Technical assistants to be called "assistant observers," "assistant chemists," etc.*—A special examination for technical assistants in the different scientific bureaus and divisions of the Department, such as the Weather Bureau, Chemical Laboratory, Division of Botany, etc. The following is a provisional list of these positions:

Weather observer.	Bacteriologist.
Analytical agricultural chemist.	Veterinarian.
Economic botanist.	Soil physicist.
Economic entomologist.	Horticulturist.
Economic zoologist.	Forester.
Economic mycologist.	Agricultural editor.
Vegetable physiologist and pathologist.	Natural history artist.

The examination for these special positions could be somewhat similar to those given heretofore for similar positions, omitting, however, the subjects included in the general examination under 1, and including French, German, Latin, or any other language that may be required, wherever necessary. It is believed that from lists of eligibles who have passed examinations under both 1 and 2, competent persons could be drawn for nearly all the technical positions in all our laboratories and divisions. It is not necessary to have a distinct list of eligibles for each bureau or division, but the different divisions should be free to select men from any of the above lists according to their needs.

Candidates should be encouraged to take two or more of the special examinations under 2, and if successful should be given the preference wherever persons of such special attainments are required. To illustrate: In case the Office of Experiment Stations needs an assistant with a certain knowledge of entomology, botany, and horticulture, it should be possible to find a person who had taken all three of these examinations and made a satisfactory grade in them. Similarly, in case the Division of Biological Survey wanted a person who, in addition to the requisite knowledge of ornithology, mammalogy, etc., has a knowledge of physiography, meteorology, and botany, this division should be able to get one from the eligibles who have taken the examinations in meteorology, zoology, and botany. It is believed that many persons could take several of these examinations and that by encouraging them to do so we would secure assistants with all the varieties of attainments that are required in the rank of assistants in this Department.

The higher places should be filled by promoting persons who had entered this rank and served there for a sufficient time to acquire the necessary technical knowledge and skill. It would thus rarely be necessary to hold special examinations for the higher positions. These examinations should be held hereafter in May or June of each year at or convenient to representative scientific institutions, in many different sections, and should be moved from institution to institution so as to reach all the leading ones every few years.

All of these candidates, especially those who took only the general examination under 1 and none of the special examination under 2, should be advised and encouraged to take one or more of the regular examinations for the departmental service, such as:

Clerk copyist.	Proofreader.
Stenographer and typewriter.	Library clerk.
Bookkeeper.	Library cataloguer.
Translator, French and German.	Draftsman, and others.
Printer.	

The object of this is to make such general assistants, and the special assistants also, when they desire it, eligible for one or more classes of positions in the general service of the Department.

This plan, as stated in the beginning, contemplates the temporary employment of these eligibles in minor positions in the Department, where they will have opportunities for observation and study which shall fit them for better work. In the interests of both the Department and these candidates, it is desirable that all minor positions in the scientific divisions and laboratories, such as those now called "messengers," "expert laborers," "assistants," "storekeepers," etc., and perhaps many in other branches of the Department, should be filled by these persons.

It would be good policy to employ these candidates in preference to others, as clerks, typewriters, stenographers, bookkeepers, translators, library clerks, draftsmen, etc., whenever they are found competent to do special work. It is proposed, therefore, to test them for these callings and give them the preference for vacancies in these lines whenever they desire them.

Persons occupying minor or general positions should be called simply "assistants" and assigned to duty of the above description wherever it may be found. Those occupying technical positions would be called "assistant chemists," "assistant botanists," "assistant observers," etc.

The compensation of these different grades is at present approximately as follows:

"Assistants" (now called messengers, expert laborers, assistants, storekeepers, etc.), from \$600 to \$1,200 per annum; "assistant chemists," etc., from \$1,000 to \$1,600.

This Department requests your earnest consideration of this plan and hopes that some way may be found to carry it out.

Very respectfully,

CHAS. W. DABNEY, Jr.,
Acting Secretary.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION,
Washington, D. C., June 22, 1896.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 20th instant, in which you outline a proposed plan of scientific examinations for the Department of Agriculture for the purpose of establishing permanent registers of eligibles instead of the present plan of holding special examinations when vacancies occur.

The Commission is of opinion that the plan suggested—that is, a basis examination to test the education and general scientific training of competitors, and a special examination to test their knowledge and experience in certain fields of science applied in your Department—will be a great improvement over the present methods by which competitors are tested only along special lines. The Commission has long felt that there was too much specialization in the examinations for the Department of Agriculture, and that owing to the narrow scope of those examinations, applicants with little or no general scientific knowledge or experience were afforded an opportunity to compete successfully with those of broader scientific training. It has been known that applicants with practically no previous knowledge of the subjects of some of those examinations and with but little scientific education, have made special preparation within a few weeks or months and have successfully passed the examinations.

The proposed plan of examinations will deter persons with no scientific attainments from entering the competition. The Commission is somewhat in doubt, however, as to whether the same general examination ought to be given in connection with each of the optional or technical subjects. For instance: Would a general test of the applicant's scientific knowledge be suitable for assistant observer in the Weather Bureau? It occurs to the Commission that but little scientific knowledge is required in such a position, and a severe test on irrelevant subjects would no doubt result in preventing competent persons from taking such an examination. This objection might be urged against some of the other optional subjects and is suggested for the consideration of your Department.

The Commission concurs in the suggestion that the examinations be held in May or June of each year at or convenient to the scientific institutions in the different sections of the country. It would, however, not be advisable to confine the examinations to those localities, as they should be held also at other points for the convenience of applicants.

The Commission will be glad to cooperate with your Department in arranging the practical details for the proposed examinations, which it is believed would be for the best interests of the service.

Very respectfully,

JOHN R. PROCTER,
President.

THE HONORABLE,
THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE.

STATUS OF THE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES.

On March 4, 1893, the total number of persons in the U. S. Department of Agriculture was.	2,497
In the classified service there were.....	698
Of whom there were—	
Excepted from competitive examination.....	80
Subject to noncompetitive examination.....	12
	92
Leaving subject to competitive examination.....	606
On November 1, 1895, the total number of employees was.....	2,019
Of whom there were—	
In the classified service.....	1,489
Excepted from competitive examination.....	4
Leaving subject to competitive examination.....	1,485

This shows an increase between March 4, 1893, and November 1, 1895, of 879 persons subject to competitive examination.

One of the first acts of the present Secretary was to have the position of the Appointment Clerk of the Department, who had served under the last administration, put under civil service rule and subject to competitive examination. Other places were brought in rapidly until now the classified service includes all officers, clerks, and employees of the Department, including the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry, chiefs of divisions, superintendents, chiefs of offices, State statistical agents, experts; all superintendents of quarantine stations, inspectors, assistant inspectors, veterinary inspectors, microscopists, assistant microscopists, meat taggers, stock examiners, and live stock agents in the Bureau of Animal Industry; all professors, forecast officials, local forecasters, observers, and all other officers and clerks in the Weather Bureau; all compositors, pressmen, folders, engineers, assistant engineers, firemen, messengers, assistant messengers, and watchmen. None of the messenger, watchman, or other subordinate grades, can be promoted to clerical positions without passing the examination, therefore, as in the case of other applicants. The only persons not in the classified civil service in the Department of Agriculture at present are the Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and the Chief of the Weather Bureau, who are appointed by the President. The private secretary to the Secretary is the only person excepted from examination by the civil service rules.

The remaining 530 persons on the rolls of the Department on November 1, 1895, were laborers, workmen, and charwomen. Every person ranking as a skilled workman, or skilled laborer, even, is now included in the civil service.

There are some 30 bureaus, divisions, offices, laboratories, and other subordinate organizations in the Department of Agriculture. Of scientific divisions three have been established during Secretary Morton's administration and seven vacancies have occurred by death and resignation among the chiefs of these divisions. How were these important positions filled? Notwithstanding the fact that none of these positions were at that time included in the classified service, those in the new divisions were filled by appointing gentlemen who had been special agents of the Department under previous administrations; five of the other vacancies were filled by promoting men in the same divisions, and only two of them were appointed from the outside during this administration.

Two appointments have been made by the President in the Department of Agriculture besides that of the Secretary. The gentleman appointed Assistant Secretary was a graduate in agricultural chemistry of a German university, had been ten years director of agricultural experiment stations in this country, and eight years president of a State university. He was not a candidate for the position and there was not a testimonial or letter in Washington indorsing him when his name was forwarded to the Senate. The office of Chief of the Weather Bureau was filled by the promotion of a professor in the Weather Bureau, who after twenty years' service had attained to that position through a competitive examination followed by a practical test of skill in forecasting the weather, held under the auspices of a board consisting of Professor Mendenhall, Professor Harrington, Major H. H. C. Dunwoody, U. S. A., and the Assistant Secretary.

The Secretary has now asked Congress to establish the office of "Director-in-Chief of scientific bureaus and investigations" in the Department of Agriculture, to be filled by the President with a broadly educated, scientific, and experienced man. This office is the keystone needed to complete the perfect arch of civil service in the Department of Agriculture.

